United Nations E/CN.18/2007/4/Add.1

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
1 February 2007

Original: English

United Nations Forum on Forests
Seventh session
New York, 16-27 April 2007
Item 5 of the provisional agenda*
Multi-stakeholder dialogue

Discussion paper contributed by the children and youth major group**

Summary

The children and youth major group welcomes the increasing attention on forest issues at the international level but is concerned by the relatively marginal impact this has on deforestation. The implementation of previous commitments with the international forest framework should be prioritized.

A greater emphasis needs to be placed on forest education and capacity-building for young people in order to ensure sustainable forest management for future generations and to increase the understanding of forests as a critical natural resource.

The world's youth and children collectively constitute a valuable human capacity, able to learn, innovate and create dynamic responses to what seem to be formidable challenges to sustainable development. In the context of forests and within the United Nations Forum on Forests process, youth and children should continue to be recognized as important actors for sustainable forest management.

* E/CN.18/2007/1.

** The present discussion paper was compiled by the children and youth major group focal point team (International Forestry Students' Association, Global Youth Network and Initiatives-Jeunes) with the assistance of their network members.

07-22776 (E) 130207

Contents

		Paragraphs	*Page*
I.	Introduction	1–4	3
II.	Priority areas for action	5–14	3
III.	Assessment of the United Nations Forum on Forests process	15–16	5
IV.	Recommendations for a non-legally binding instrument on forests	17–22	5
V.	Recommendations for the multi-year programme of work	23	6
VI.	Conclusions and recommendations	24–27	7

I. Introduction

1. The children and youth major group has been actively involved, over the past years, in the United Nations Forum on Forests process at the Forum's third, fourth, fifth and sixth sessions, particularly by submitting inputs addressing key issues for youth and children and voicing their priorities for sustainable forest management.

2. The primary objective of youth participation is to promote intergenerational equity in sustainable forest management through education and the transfer of knowledge to the younger generations and access to natural resources. Specifically, the goals of the participation of the youth and children representatives are to:

(a) Use their capacity as a worldwide youth network to inform the policy dialogue debate from young people's perspective;

(b) Demonstrate the potential of forest-related education in the implementation of sustainable forest management and international forest policy processes;

(c) Advocate means to use and increase this potential;

(d) Promote the need and opportunities for stronger integration of forest-related education in the international forest policy dialogue at all levels.

3. With regard to the Forum's seventh session, we would like to review youth priorities and assess the way they have been addressed by decision makers.

4. This discussion paper has been compiled by the children and youth major group focal point team (International Forestry Students' Association, Global Youth Network and Initiatives-Jeunes) with the assistance of their network members.

II. Priority areas for action

A. Education and capacity-building

5. Formal and informal forest education has a multiplying effect on the development of young people and their communities. Primary education is important in ensuring that children are affected at the most foundational stage in their lives; secondary education is important for raising environmental awareness among young people and educating them about ecosystems; and tertiary education is critical for ensuring the integrity of skills among foresters, the scientific community and other forest-related stakeholders.

> "Access to education is often limited in developing countries, where many young people are not even able to attain a basic education. Yet even in wealthy countries, education concerning forest conservation is not always included in standard school curricula. This needs to be addressed, starting at the primary level, if students are to be aware of the value and benefits of forests." (E/CN.18/2004/4/Add.3, para. 18)

6. Member States are encouraged to set standards for quality forestry education by assessing and rearticulating current formal and informal environmental education programmes at all levels. A strategy for filling the gaps in forestry curricula should be formulated out of such a process and in cooperation with other Member States.

> "In order to ensure sustainable forest management across generations and to increase understanding of forests as a critical resource, a greater emphasis needs to be placed on education through the integration of social and cultural aspects of forests in kindergarten, school and university curricula."[1]

7. Member States should support informal forest education by enhancing the capacity of youth organizations to carry out educational programmes. Young people are often highly motivated to contribute to the development of society, having fresh ideas and innovative approaches. Youth as a demographic can effectively contribute to the implementation of sustainable development, including sustainable forest management.

8. Education is the key to making wise decisions about the future of the world's forests, as it is central to enabling children and youth to understand and communicate the link between using up resources today and the need to access them in the future in order to sustain their livelihoods. Criteria and indicators need to reflect the extent to which education has been integrated into national forest programmes and the national sustainable development agenda.

9. The children and youth major group believes that enhancing education and capacity-building, especially among young people, raises awareness and knowledge about forests and should therefore constitute a crucial addition to state, public and private sector efforts.

B. Participation

10. A great obstacle to action by young people and children on the subject of forests is the obstacle experienced by youth and children non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in accessing the United Nations. Although the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and similar United Nations agencies host youth programmes, young people's access to participating and influencing official United Nations processes is minimal, due to lack of information and stringent exclusive criteria for obtaining consultative status with the Economic and Social Council. There is, however, growing consensus that youth and children are important stakeholders in official United Nations processes, hence the inclusion of a multi-stakeholder dialogue within the Forum.

11. Forest issues and their complexity often elude the uninformed young person concerned with the environment. It must be pointed out, however, that these young people still have the capacity and basic knowledge with which to contribute greatly to meeting the objectives of the Forum and implementing the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests/Intergovernmental Forum on Forests proposals for action.

12. Following on the above point, it must be recognized that youth have only recently been included in the multi-stakeholder process of the Forum. Within the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests/Intergovernmental Forum on Forests proposals for action, youth are not identified as stakeholders for implementation. However, this demographic group is included under the grouping of non-governmental organizations. It can be argued that the exclusion of youth as a major group within

[1] *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2004, Supplement No. 22* and corrigendum (E/2004/42 and Corr.1), chap. IV, sect. A, para. 10, E/CN.18/2004/CRP.2, para. 9.

the proposals for action marginalized youth input and action towards implementing the proposals. It is strongly encouraged that any further processes include the youth and children demographic as responsible partners for implementation.

13. We regard the promotion of cross-sector cooperation as a key element to effective stakeholder participation and seek to foster the involvement of teaching and research institutions in decision-making processes. This translates into member States fostering a national atmosphere that supports the growth of non-governmental organizations and collaboration.

14. Young people emphasize that forest policies can only be the result of governance and not just of government.

III. Assessment of the United Nations Forum on Forests process

15. We welcome the opportunity given to young people to have a voice in the United Nations Forum on Forests through the multi-stakeholder dialogue. We are pleased by increasing attention on forest issues at the international level, but at the same time concerned by the relatively marginal impact this has on deforestation. We would like to see a bigger political will to implement previous commitments and the non-legally binding instrument.

16. We fear that while forests become increasingly distant to the urban youth, the linkages get weaker and the recognition of forests as a natural part of the living environment diminished. Young people's access to forests should be ensured and facilitated in order to avoid a loss of interest in and connection to nature. Overall recognition of forests as a natural part of society should be enhanced, as should the role of local communities in forest management. The well-being of communities, fostered through ownership in forest management, directly influences the well-being of their children and youth.

IV. Recommendations for a non-legally binding instrument on forests

A. Education

17. Young people are convinced that we need to foster — through education — the values, behaviours and lifestyles required for a sustainable future. Education for sustainable development has come to be seen as a process of learning how to make decisions that consider the long-term future of the economy, ecology and equity of all communities. Building the capacity for such future-oriented thinking is a key task of education and a prerequisite for achieving intergenerational equity.

18. Education is the key to raising awareness among children about the necessity of the sustainable use of forests and to provide them with basic knowledge of forest ecosystems.

"Youth and children have much to contribute to the execution and evolution of scientific forest research, and their participation sho d be enabled through

improved forest-related educational opportunities." (E/CN.18/2004/4/Add.3, para. 29)

"Some partnerships tend to exclude stakeholders, such as youth and women, and often become labelled as social gatherings rather than as effective catalysts for positive change. Lack of information access, education, communication networks, as well as adequate human capacity and financial resources also hamper the ability of various stakeholders to become involved on an equal footing and in maintaining constant participation."[2]

19. Member States should support capacity-building activities carried out by youth organizations, such as educational programmes for sustainable forest management.

"Strengthening forest education and research and development through global, regional and subregional networks, as well as relevant organizations, institutions and centres of excellence in all regions of the world, particularly in developing countries, as well as countries with economies in transition".[3]

20. In addition, integrating the support of youth organizations' work and activities by enhancing access to state, public and private sector funding and information is crucial to effective youth participation in sustainable forest management.

B. Economic and social aspects

21. As highlighted in previous Forum sessions, especially at the AHEG on the NLBI, forest products sourced in developing countries are transported to be processed away from the source — sometimes illegally — with very little employment or income generation derived by local communities. This results in a no-win situation in which local communities are stripped of both their forest resources and potential income from manufacturing and processing.

22. Laws that relate to the sourcing, logging, processing and trade in forest products need to favour the local community where the forest products were sourced.

Resolution 3/1 3. Calls upon countries to take immediate action on domestic forest law enforcement and illegal international trade in forest products, including in forest biological resources, with the support of the international community.

V. Recommendations for the multi-year programme of work

23. The recommendations for the multi-year programme of work are the following:

(a) **Assessment of the status of formal and informal environmental and, in particular, forestry education at the primary and secondary school level. The**

[2] Ibid., para. 28.

[3] Ibid., *2006, Supplement No. 22* (E/2006/42), chap. I, sect. A, para 7 (b).

hosting of a national symposium on sustainable development education could assist in implementing this recommendation;

(b) The creation of partnerships with local authorities and youth and children stakeholders with a view to building the capacity of youth forest-related organizations at the local level;

(c) The establishment of criteria and indicators that reflect the status of education within national forest programmes and the status of forestry within national education curricula;

(d) The inclusion of youth and children stakeholders and tertiary education stakeholders in the design, implementation and evaluation of national forest programmes.

VI. Conclusions and recommendations

24. As described, young people believe they can and will contribute to sustainable forest management through:

- **facilitating capacity-building activities of future policymakers through practical experience**
- **providing a global educational network of students as a resource for both views and future collaborations of young people in implementation at the regional and subregional levels**
- **providing strong links to higher education institutions, as centres for both technological and scientific research and capacity-building, around the world**
- **providing a source of innovative thinking, new ideas and a fresh perspective to the forest policy dialogue**

25. Experience from around the world has demonstrated that the role of major groups in general and youth in particular in forest management is crucial, both as a source of experience worthy of upscaling and replication and since they will be the ultimate beneficiaries of good practices.

26. Accordingly, young people advocate for active involvement in partnership-related and capacity-building activities at all levels, including partnership fairs and learning centres.[4]

27. National and regional criteria and indicators frameworks for sustainable forest management must include indicators that reflect capacity-building for education at all levels and the extent to which education has been integrated into national forest programmes.

[4] Agreed language of the Commission on Sustainable Development.